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Working arrangements

Working arrangements and forms of employment, such as casual work, fixed-term, independent contractors, shift work, job flexibility and job security

Reference period August 2020

Released 11/12/2020

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Key statistics

- 2.3 million casual employees (22% of employees, 18% of all employed), down from 2.6 million in Feb 2020.
- 20% of employees didn't have minimum guaranteed hours, up from 19% in Aug 2014.
- 1.0 million independent contractors (8.2% of employed).
- 3% of employees were registered with a labour hire firm/employment agency.

Prior to August 2020, information on working arrangements was published in [Characteristics of Employment \(/statistics/labour/earnings-and-work-hours/characteristics-employment-australia/aug-2019\)](#).

From August 2020, statistics from the Characteristics of Employment survey are now published in three topic-based releases - this Working arrangements release, as well as:

- [Employee earnings \(/statistics/labour/earnings-and-work-hours/employee-earnings/aug-2020\)](/statistics/labour/earnings-and-work-hours/employee-earnings/aug-2020)
- [Trade union membership \(/statistics/labour/earnings-and-work-hours/trade-union-membership/aug-2020\)](/statistics/labour/earnings-and-work-hours/trade-union-membership/aug-2020).

Employee earnings, working arrangements and trade union membership data from the Characteristics of employment survey for 2014 to 2020 will be available in [TableBuilder \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6333.0.00.001Main+Features1August%202019\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6333.0.00.001Main+Features1August%202019) from 16 December 2020.

TableBuilder enables the creation of customised tables and graphs.

Casual employment

The main indicator ABS uses for casual employment is whether an employee is entitled to paid leave, which includes paid sick leave or paid annual leave. These entitlements are usually reserved for non-casual or permanent employment.

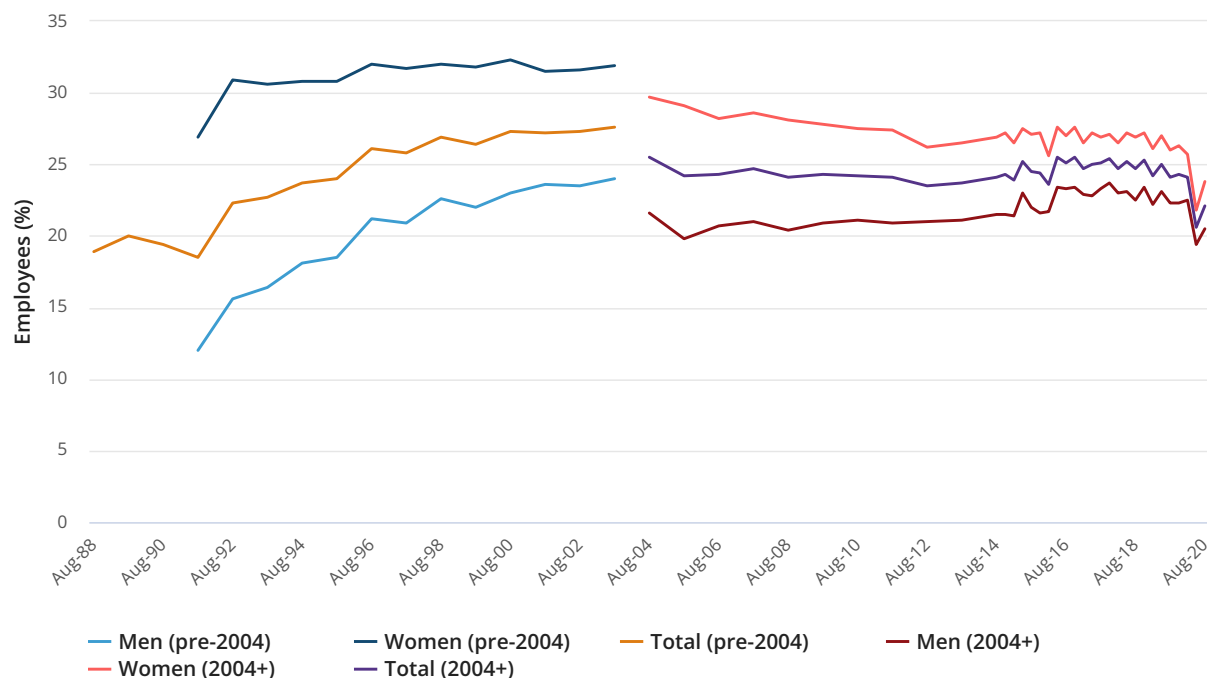
In August 2020, there were 2.3 million employees who were not entitled to paid leave. This is equivalent to 22% of all employees, or 18% of all employed people.

For employees who work part-time in their main job, 48% were not entitled to paid leave (1.6 million).

Quarterly measures of paid leave entitlements have been collected in the Labour Force Survey since August 2014, and are available in Table 13 of [Labour Force, Australia, Detailed \(https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia-detailed/latest-release\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia-detailed/latest-release).

In May 2020, the proportion of employees in casual employment fell to 20.6%, which is the lowest rate since August 1991.

Share of casual employment



Sources: 1. [Employment Benefits, Australia](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6334.0) (https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6334.0) (1988-1995), 2. [Trade Union Members, Australia](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6325.0) (https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6325.0) (1996) 3. [Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership, Australia](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/allprimarymainfeatures/3AC58BDF664E8ED5CA256FCB00735B35?opendocument) (https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/allprimarymainfeatures/3AC58BDF664E8ED5CA256FCB00735B35?opendocument) (1997-2003), 4. [Characteristics of Employment, Australia](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6333.0Main+Features1August%202017?OpenDocument=) (https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6333.0Main+Features1August%202017?OpenDocument=) (2004-2013), 5. [Labour Force, Australia, Detailed](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia-detailed/latest-release) (https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia-detailed/latest-release) (2014-2020)

Notes: 1. pre-2004 series: includes Owner Managers of Incorporated Enterprises (OMIEs), 2. 2004+ series: excludes OMIEs, 3. From August 2014, casual employment is collected quarterly in the Labour Force Survey. 4. The ABS plans to produce historically comparable estimates for the pre-2004 period, excluding OMIEs, in the future.

What is casual employment?

There is no single definitive measure to determine the number of people in casual

employment at any one time; however, the ABS most regularly uses information on paid leave entitlements as a proxy for measuring casual employment in the Australian labour force. The ABS has three data items related to casual employment:

- employees without paid leave entitlements
- employees who receive a casual loading (last collected in August 2013)
- employees who consider their job to be casual (self-perception).

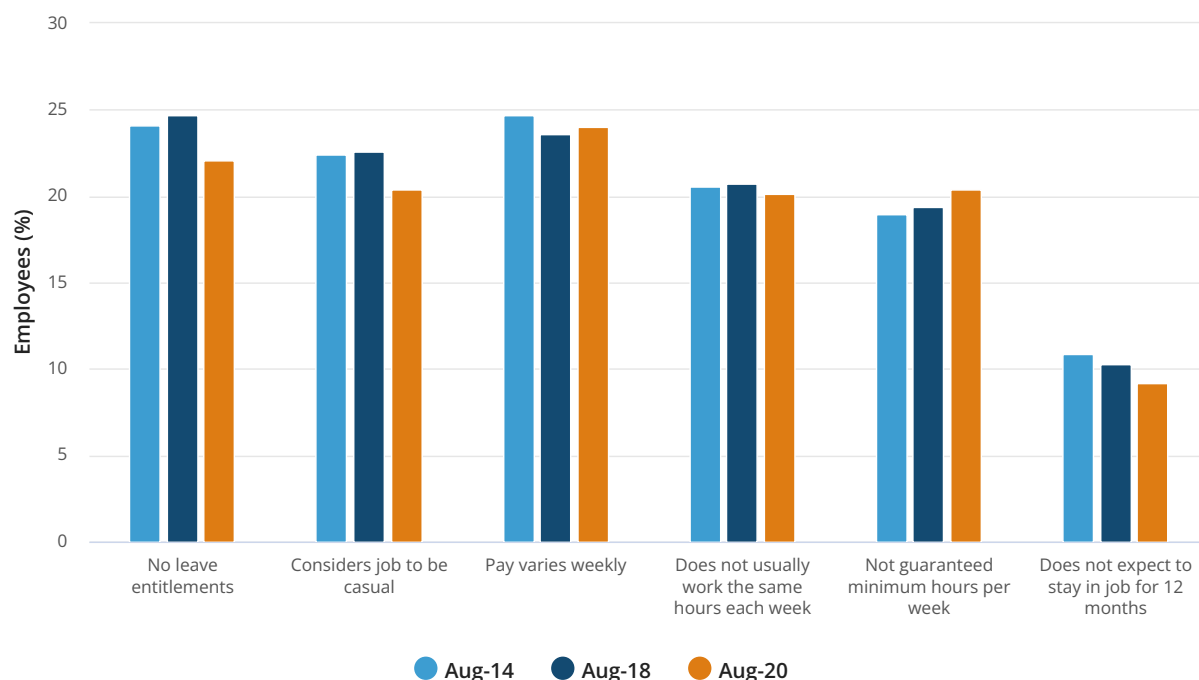
For more information, refer to [Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/6102.0.55.001~Feb%202018~Main%20Features~Employment~4) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/6102.0.55.001~Feb%202018~Main%20Features~Employment~4>).

There are several other broader indicators of casual employment that can be used, for example a variable number of hours worked or earnings each week.

For employees in August 2020:

- 20.4% consider their job to be casual (self-perception) (2.1 million)
- 24.0% have earnings that vary from one period to the next (excluding overtime payments) (2.5 million)
- 20.1% do not usually work the same number of hours each week (2.1 million)
- 20.4% do not have a guaranteed minimum number of hours each week (2.1 million)
- 9.2% do not expect to be working for current employer in 12 months (970,000).

Indicators of casual employment



Working time arrangements

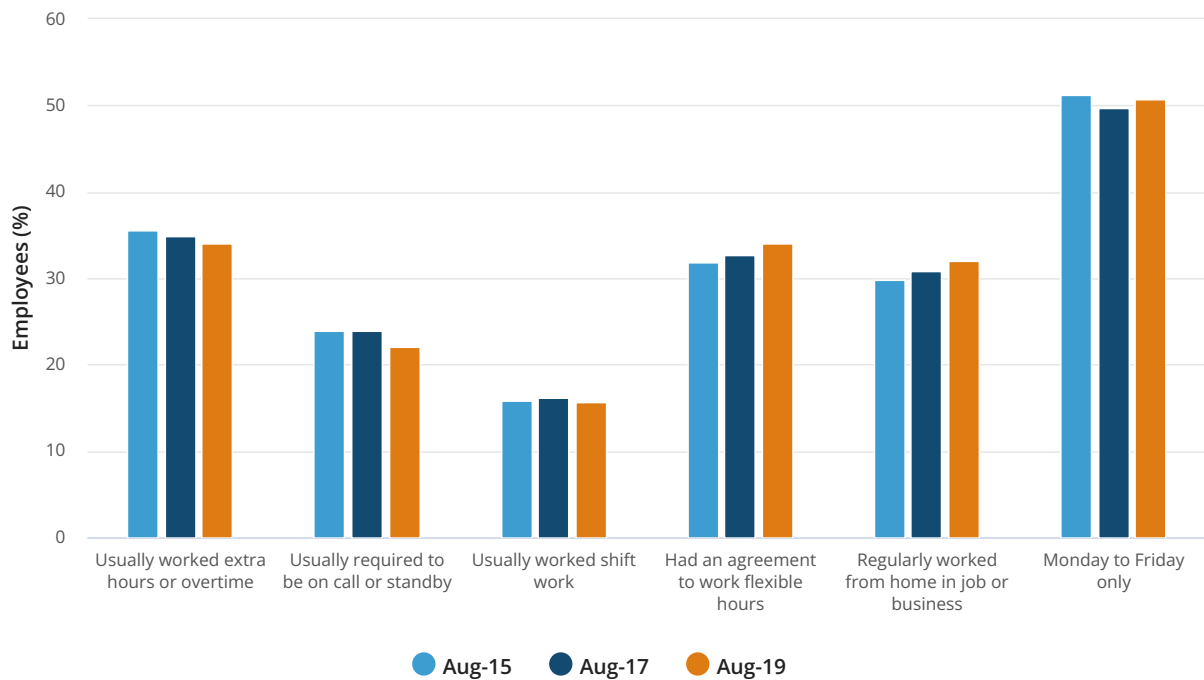
For employed people in August 2019:

- 34% had an agreement to work flexible hours, up from 32% in 2015
- 32% regularly worked from home in August 2019, up from 30% in 2015
- 34% usually worked extra hours or overtime, down from 36% in 2015
- 22% were usually required to be on call or standby, down from 24% in 2015.

Some topic information is collected in alternating years for the Characteristics of Employment publication. As a result, this publication contains data from both August 2019 and August 2020.

More recent information on working conditions related to flexible working arrangements is available in [Household impacts of COVID](#).

Working arrangements



Independent contractors

Additional questions in the Characteristics of Employment survey allow employment relationships to be reclassified using the Forms of employment framework. This enables people's employment relationships to be classified as either:

- employees
- independent contractors
- other business operators.

Forms of employment framework

The following provides an outline of how people are classified in the Forms of employment framework.

In the monthly Labour Force survey (LFS), people are classified as employees, owner managers of incorporated enterprises (OMIEs) and owner managers of unincorporated enterprises (OMUEs) based on their responses to questions.

These people are then asked questions to identify key characteristics of employees, independent contractors and other business operators. The responses to these questions are then used to determine how people are classified as employees, independent contractors and other business operators in the Forms of employment framework.

These questions are:

- Do you work as an independent contractor in your job?
- Do you receive a pay slip/advice?
- Do you/Does your business invoice or bill clients/employers?
- Excluding wages and salary, are you able to make drawings from your employer/business?

The following decision table, shows how people are classified in the Forms of employment framework.

| Status in employment (LFS) | Whether considered to be an independent contractor | Whether received pay slip/advice | Whether invoices or bills clients/employers | Whether able to make drawings from employer/business | emp |
|----------------------------|--|----------------------------------|---|--|-------|
| Employees | Yes | Yes | Yes | - | Ind C |
| Employees | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Ind C |
| Employees | Yes | Yes | No | No | |
| Employees | Yes | No | Yes | - | Ind C |
| Employees | Yes | No | No | - | Ind C |
| Employees | No | Yes | - | - | |

| Status in employment (LFS) | Whether considered to be an independent contractor | Whether received pay slip/advice | Whether invoices or bills clients/employers | Whether able to make drawings from employer/business | emp |
|----------------------------|--|----------------------------------|---|--|-------|
| Employees | No | No | Yes | - | Ind C |
| Employees | No | No | No | - | |
| Owner managers | Yes | Yes | Yes | - | Ind C |
| Owner managers | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Ind C |
| Owner managers | Yes | Yes | No | No | |
| Owner managers | Yes | No | Yes | - | Ind C |
| Owner managers | Yes | No | No | - | Ind C |
| Owner managers | No | Yes | Yes | - | Other |
| Owner managers | No | Yes | No | Yes | Other |
| Owner managers | No | Yes | No | No | |
| Owner managers | No | No | Yes | - | Other |
| Owner managers | No | No | No | - | Other |

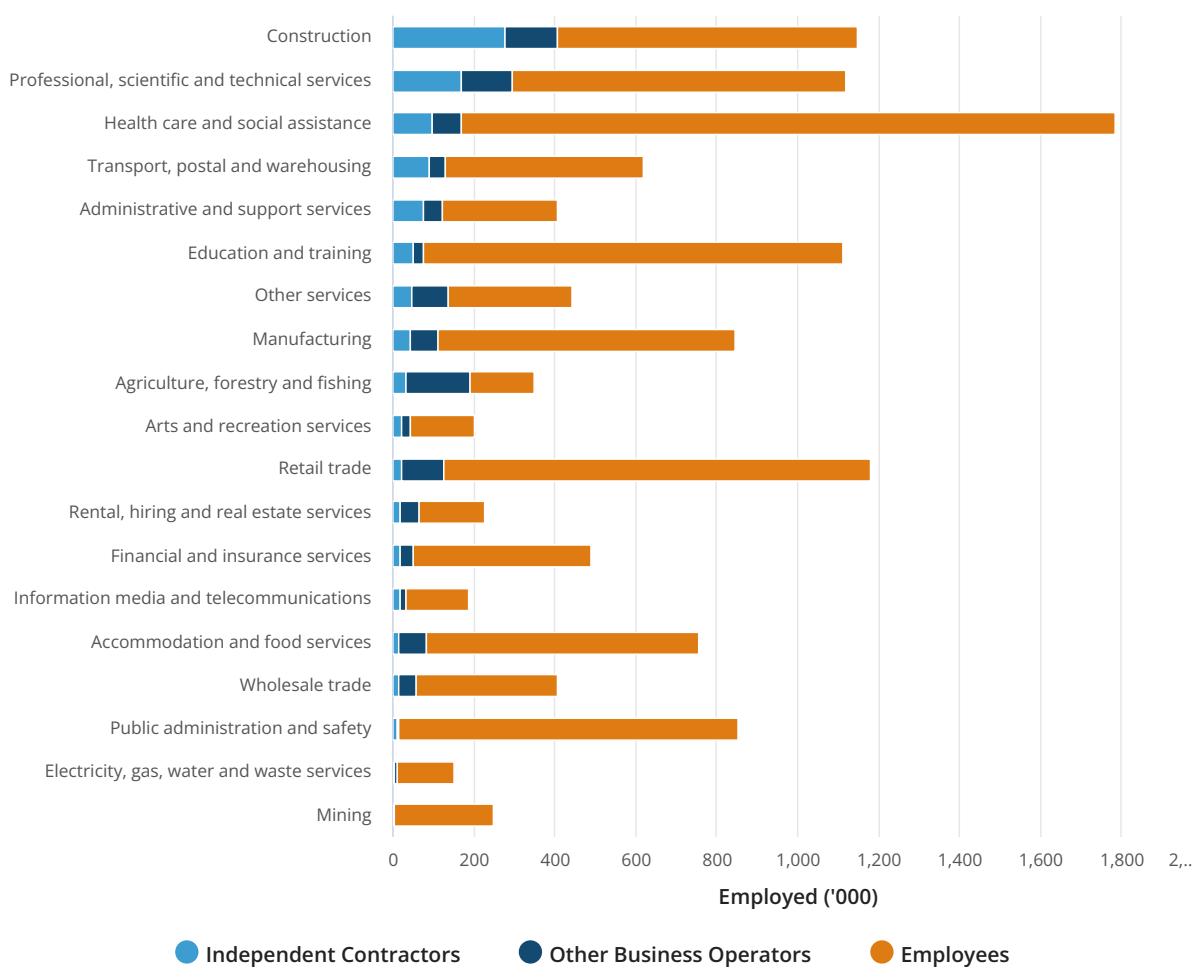
In August 2020, the industries which had the highest percentage of independent contractors were Construction (24%), Administrative and support services (18%) and Professional, scientific and technical services (15%).

The largest proportional increases for independent contractors from August 2014 to 2020 was seen in Transport, postal and warehousing (11% to 15%). The largest proportional decrease was seen in Construction (30% to 24%).

The industries with the highest proportion of other business operators were Agriculture, forestry and fishing (46%) and Other services (21%).

The industries with the highest proportion of non-employees (both independent contractors and other business operators) were Agriculture, forestry and fishing (55%) and Construction (36%).

Forms of employment, by industry

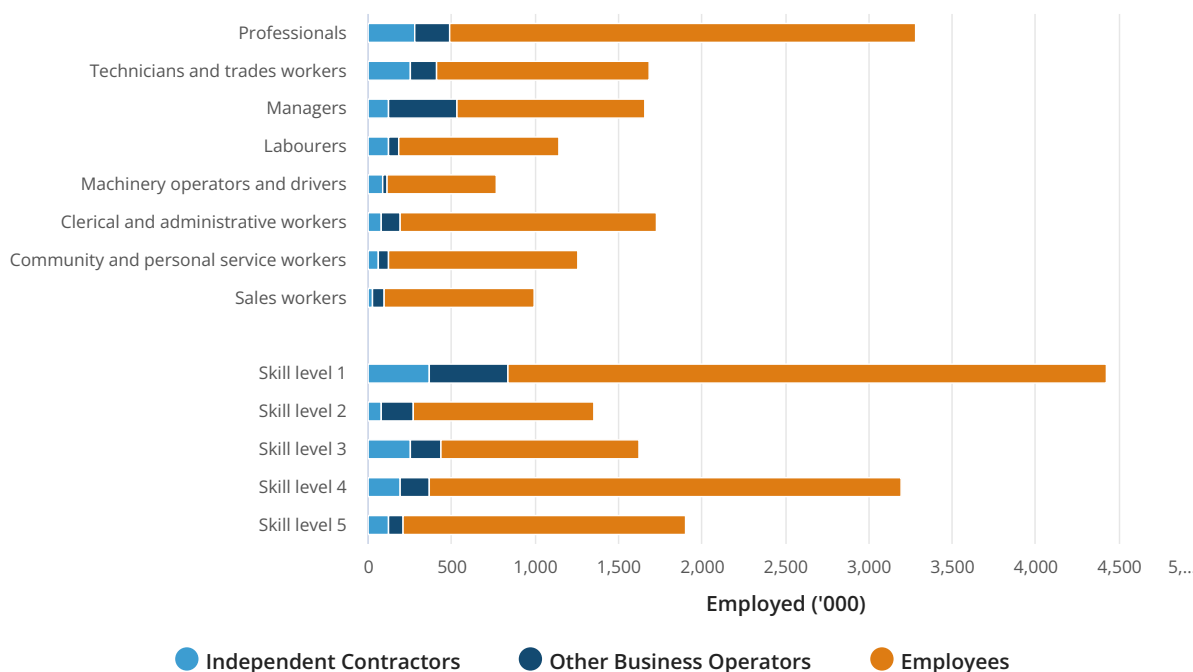


1. For more information on Industries, refer to [Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification \(ANZSIC\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1292.0) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1292.0>).

The occupations with the highest proportions of Independent Contractors were:

- Technicians and trades workers (15%)
- Machinery operators and drivers (11%)
- Labourers (10%).

Forms of employment, by occupation



1. Data is coded to ANZSCO ver 1.2. For more information on Occupations and Skill level, refer to [ANZSCO - Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations \(https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/1220.0Chapter32013,%20Version%201.3\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/1220.0Chapter32013,%20Version%201.3)

Labour hire

In August 2020, 3% of employees reported being registered with a labour hire firm or employment agency. Of these, 33% reported they were paid by a labour hire firm or employment agency.

The median weekly earnings for employees who were paid by a labour hire or employment agency were \$1,197, versus \$1,150 for employees who were not registered with a labour hire or employment agency.

The occupations with the highest proportion of employees who were paid by a labour hire firm or employment agency were:

- Machinery operators and drivers (4%)
- Labourers (2%).

Data downloads

Table 1b - Median earnings for Employees by sex, state and status of employment, 2004–2020

[↓ Download XLS](#)

[352.5 KB]

Table 1c - Median earnings for employees by state, full-time or part-time and status of employment, 2004–2020

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[308 KB]

Table 2 - Median earnings for employees by demographic characteristics and full-time or part-time

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[205 KB]

Table 3 - Distribution of earnings for employees by industry

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[308 KB]

Table 4 - Distribution of earnings for employees by occupation and skill level

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[185 KB]

Table 5 - Distribution of earnings for employees by educational qualification

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[172.5 KB]

Table 7 - Median earnings for employees and OMIEs by working arrangements

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[255.5 KB]

Table 8 - Median earnings for employees and OMIEs by demographic characteristics

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[279 KB]

Table 9 - Form of employment by demographic characteristics

[↓ Download XLS](#)

[225.5 KB]

Table 10 - Form of employment by industry, occupation and educational qualification

[↓ Download XLS](#)

[228 KB]

Table 11 - Independent contractors by whether had authority over own work, industry and occupation

[↓ Download XLS](#)

[158.5 KB]

Table 13 - Median earnings for employees by status of labour hire and demographic characteristics

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[255 KB]

All 2020 data cubes

[↓ Download ZIP](#)

[304.07 KB]

Historical data: Table 7 - Median earnings for employees and OMIEs by working arrangements

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[248 KB]

Historical data: Table 8 - Median earnings for employees and OMIEs by demographic characteristics

[↓ Download ZIP](#)

[326.8 KB]

Historical data: Table 9 - Form of employment by demographic characteristics

[↓ Download ZIP](#)

[270.96 KB]

Historical data: Table 10 - Form of employment by industry, occupation and educational qualification

[↓ Download ZIP](#)

[330.19 KB]

Historical data: Table 11 - Independent contractors by whether had authority over own work, industry and occupation

[↓ Download ZIP](#)

[97.66 KB]

Historical data: Table 13 - Median earnings for employees by status of labour hire and demographic characteristics

[↓ Download ZIP](#)

[160.13 KB]

Previous catalogue number

- This release uses ABS catalogue number 6336.0*.
- Data from this release was previously published in [Characteristics of Employment \(https://author.absweb.aws.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/earnings-and-work-hours/characteristics-employment-australia/aug-2019\)](https://author.absweb.aws.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/earnings-and-work-hours/characteristics-employment-australia/aug-2019) (catalogue number 6333.0**).

Prior to 2014, statistics related to working arrangements were published in:

- [Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership, Australia \(https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6310.0\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6310.0) (catalogue number 6310.0)
- [Forms of Employment, Australia \(https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6359.0\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6359.0) (catalogue number 6359.0)
- [Working Time Arrangements, Australia \(https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/PrimaryMainFeatures/6342.0\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/PrimaryMainFeatures/6342.0) (catalogue number 6342.0)
- [Locations of Work, Australia \(https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/PrimaryMainFeatures/6275.0\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/PrimaryMainFeatures/6275.0) (catalogue number 6275.0) (includes data on working from home)
- [Employment Benefits, Australia \(https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6334.0\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6334.0) (catalogue number 6334.0).

*Note: Catalogue number 6336.0 was previously used for Information Paper: Average Weekly Earnings: New Series to Replace Former Payroll Tax Based Series, 1982 (not yet available on website but a digital scan is available on request).

**Note: Catalogue number 6333.0 was previously used for [Working Conditions, Australia \(Preliminary\) \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/6335.0Feb-May%201979?OpenDocument\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/6335.0Feb-May%201979?OpenDocument), Feb to May 1979.

Methodology

[Characteristics of Employment, Australia methodology, August 2020](#)